

# The Concept of Censorship in Dreams within Psychoanalytic Theory: A Review Based on Atatürk's Dream

Psikanalitik Kuramda Rüyalardaki Sansür Kavramı: Atatürk'ün Rüyası Üzerinden Bir Derleme

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## ABSTRACT

According to Freud, the human mind is characterised by a dynamic component, which he refers to as the "censoring agency". This concept is also perceived by some to symbolise a certain authority. This agency is responsible for determining whether an emerging desire is suitable for entry into consciousness. It excludes anything that could potentially cause discomfort if the desire were to be realised or stimulated. In Freud's view, the censor never entirely ceases to function during sleep; rather, it becomes less rigid and less effective. Consequently, certain distressing elements of repressed material are able to evade the still-active, though relaxed, censor through the utilisation of various mechanisms within dreamwork, such as displacement, condensation, and symbolism. This enables them to achieve a limited alternative form of satisfaction. Freud's dream theory is not limited to individual therapy; it can also help analyze major figures like Atatürk. Atatürk's fatal illness emerged in 1937, and he was diagnosed with liver disease in January 1938. As his condition worsened, he was moved to Dolmabahçe Palace. With the illness progressing, fluid had to be drained from his abdomen. Fearing intestinal perforation, Atatürk dictated his will on September 6. Paracentesis was performed on September 7 and repeated on September 22. A few days later, Atatürk had a dream, which he shared with his aide-de-camp Salih Bozok. In this review article, the concept of censorship in Freud's dream theory is evaluated through the analysis of a historical dream of Atatürk, both in terms of the explanatory power of the theory and the criticisms directed at it.

**Keywords:** Atatürk, Freud, dream, censorship

## ÖZ

Freud, insan zihninde "sansürleme ajansı" adını verdiği, bir yanıla otoriteyi de simgeleyen dinamik bir bölümün, ortaya çıkan bir arzunun bilinçli hale gelmesinin uygun olup olmadığına karar vererek, ilgili arzuya ulaşma veya canlandırma durumunda tatsızlık üretebilecek her şeyi dışarıda bıraktığını belirtir. Freud'a göre uyku durumunda sansür hiçbir zaman tamamen ortadan kalkmaz bununla birlikte uyku dışındaki döneme göre azalarak gevşer. Bunun sonucunda, bastırılan malzemenin rahatsız edici kimi özelliklerine rüya çalışmasındaki yer değiştirme, yoğunlaşma, sembolizm gibi çeşitli mekanizmalar aracılığıyla kılık değiştirilerek, halen devam etse de gevşemiş haldeki sansürden kaçarak kısıtlı da olsa yedek bir tatmin sağlanmış olur. Freud'un düşünce kuramı, yalnızca bireysel terapi süreçleriyle sınırlı kalmayıp, geçmişte yaşamış ve toplumların kolektif hafızasında yer edinmiş Atatürk gibi önemli kişiliklerin iç dünyalarına dair ruhsal çözümlenmelere de katkı sunabilir. Atatürk'ün ölümüne neden olan hastalığı 1937 yılında kendini göstermiş, Ocak 1938'de kendisine karaciğer hastalığı teşhisi konulmuştur. Ağırlaşan hastalığı nedeniyle Atatürk, 24 Temmuz 1938 gecesi Dolmabahçe Sarayı'na nakledilmiştir. Hastalığın ilerlemesiyle karnından su alınması gereken ve bu sırada bağırsaklarının delineceğinden kaygı duyan Atatürk, 6 Eylül 1938'de vasiyetini yazdırmıştır. 7 Eylül'de ilk kez ponksiyon yapılan Atatürk'e aynı işlem 22 Eylül 1938'de yeniden uygulanmıştır. Bu işlemin birkaç gün sonrasında bir rüya gören Atatürk bu rüyasını yaveri Salih Bozok'a anlatmıştır. Bu derleme yazısında, Freud'un düşünce kuramındaki sansür kavramı, hem kuramın açıklayıcı gücü hem de bu kurama yöneltilmiş eleştiriler çerçevesinde, Atatürk'ün tarihsel bir rüyasının analizi üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Atatürk, Freud, rüya, sansür

## Introduction

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Although Freud did not explicitly indicate by whom, he anticipated that his dream theory would inevitably encounter universal opposition. Nevertheless, he did not consider that dreams could carry meaning in diverse ways; rather, he restricted their significance to the representation of wishes (Freud 1900).

According to Freud, the id, which constitutes the source of the entire psyche, is governed by the pleasure principle, striving for the immediate gratification of all desires and needs (Freud 1920). The ego, which develops from the id and operates in accordance with the reality principle, mediates these boundless and unlocalized desires of the id, enabling their expression and satisfaction in ways acceptable to the external world (Freud 1961). Within this framework, Freud conceptualized neurotic symptoms as attempts to negotiate a compromise between “two mental currents” or “opposing tendencies” (Freud 1909). He further emphasized that the conflict between these two opposing currents becomes particularly manifest in dreams, noting: “When I re-examine the dream-thoughts, I usually find that the most intense psychological impulses striving to assert themselves are engaged in a struggle against other impulses that quite definitely oppose them” (Freud 1900).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud refers to his own dream of drinking water as well as certain dreams observed in children, noting that such dreams reveal their meanings without disguise and are of invaluable importance in demonstrating the fulfillment of wishes (Freud 1900). However, in most dreams experienced in adulthood, the manifestation of wishes is not as clear as in childhood dreams, due to the operation of the censorship mechanism.

In this study, the censorship mechanism at the core of Freud’s theory of dreams is planned to be discussed in light of both theoretical explanations and the criticisms directed toward this concept. The functioning of censorship in dreams is examined within the framework of dream mechanisms such as condensation, displacement, and emotions, while the views of post-Freudian theorists are also considered to evaluate the contemporary validity of the concept. Furthermore, in order to test the theoretical framework through a concrete example, a dream narrated by Atatürk to his aide-de-camp in 1938 and later recorded in historical sources is analyzed within the context of Freud’s theory of dreams.

## The Concept of Censorship in Dreams

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The dynamic part of the human mind that Freud called the censoring agency, which in one aspect symbolizes authority, determines whether an emerging desire will be allowed to reach the level of consciousness, excluding anything that might generate dissatisfaction regarding those desires or rekindle such dissatisfaction (Freud 1955). According to Freud, censorship never completely disappears during sleep; however, it diminishes and relaxes compared to the waking state (Freud 1900). When the state of sleep ends, censorship rapidly regains its full force—something Freud regarded as at least one of the reasons why certain dreams are forgotten—and whatever was gained during the period of relaxed censorship is quickly erased (Freud 1900).

Freud notes that in dreams, due to censorship, only a very small minority of dream-thoughts can be represented by their ideational elements (Freud 1920, 1933). In this context, according to Freud, a dream is not a faithful translation or literal reflection of the dream-thoughts, but rather a highly incomplete and fragmented version of them (Freud 1900). At present, the relationship between Freud’s dream theory and neuroscientific evidence remains a matter of debate (Boag 2006). Freud has been criticized by many authors with respect to the censorship process, which constitutes the core of his dream theory, on the grounds that there is “no scientific evidence” for it (Hobson and Pace-Schott 1999, Hobson 1999, Domhoff 2004).

## Critical Perspectives on the Concept of Censorship

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Hobson and Pace-Schott (1999) argued that the consequences of decreased activity in the executive functions of the frontal lobes during sleep have been conceptualized, by Freud and his followers, as a

ensorship mechanism that makes fine distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable desires, a conceptualization they consider flawed. The activation-synthesis hypothesis, developed by Hobson and McCarley (1977), proposes that dreams are the result of the chaotic nature of pontine (brainstem) activity during REM sleep. According to this hypothesis, the forebrain does its best to make sense of these activities during sleep and, operating under suboptimal conditions, constructs the “best possible story” under the framework of a dream, even if the resulting narrative appears “bizarre.”

Hobson further emphasizes the chaotic nature of brainstem activity, adding that “unpredictability is the friend of dream scientists who cannot explain why a particular dream story is selected on a particular night” (Hobson 2014). In contrast to Hobson’s claims, the psychoanalyst Solms, in studies with patients suffering from traumatic brain injuries, demonstrated that dreams are more closely associated with neural networks in the forebrain than with those in the brainstem, and that brainstem activity is absent in dreams occurring during non-REM sleep (Solms 2000).

Freud argued that the bizarre content in dreams is the product of forces hidden from consciousness, and that the paths for the gratification of drives are repressed due to anxiety over punishment, “...forcing them to enter new routes that provide substitute gratifications” (Freud 1915, 1920). On the other hand, Hobson contends that repressed mental content may contribute to the formation of dream imagery, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for dreaming (Hobson 1988). Similarly, Solms and Turnbull propose that the bizarreness observed in some dreams can be explained solely by regression to primary process thinking, without the need to invoke the function of censorship (Solms and Turnbull 2002).

According to critics, Freud’s metaphor of dream censorship is unscientific and unacceptable because it represents a superior agency that knows which wishes and desires are forbidden or acceptable, determines what distortions to apply to prevent the ego from becoming aware of these desires during dreaming, can move freely across all compartments of the mind if necessary, and remains awake even during sleep (Boag 2006). Maze and Henry directly reject Freud’s theory, stating, “We cannot believe in the existence of such little inner people who know the censorship” (Maze and Henry 1996).

On the other hand, Freud, as if anticipating possible criticisms of his theory—particularly regarding the concept of censorship—explicitly cautions: “I hope you do not understand the term ‘censorship’ in an overly anthropomorphic way, nor imagine the ‘censor of dreams’ as a small, serious little man or a spirit living in some corner of the brain carrying out its duties; at the same time, I hope you do not take the term in an overly ‘localizing’ sense either. That is, you should not think that such a censorship effect originates from a specific ‘brain center’ or that it would cease if this center were damaged or removed. For the time being, this term is merely a useful expression for describing a dynamic relationship” (Freud 1916–17).

Freud defines the concept of censorship not as a mechanical or personified entity, but as a dynamic relationship among mental processes, situating its effects on dream content within a broad theoretical framework. According to him, repressed desires become incapable of direct expression due to the influence of censorship; various mental operations are therefore required for these desires to be represented indirectly in dreams. Freud (1900) identifies the primary mechanisms involved in this process as condensation and displacement.

## **Mechanisms of Condensation and Displacement in Dreams**

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In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud explains the mechanism of condensation in dreams through various examples, including his own “Botanical Monograph” dream, as well as “Irma’s Injection,” “A Beautiful Dream,” and “The May Bug Dream.” According to Freud, through the process of condensation, a single dream element can simultaneously refer to multiple thoughts and desires (Freud 1900). In Freud’s “Irma’s Injection” dream, the figure of Dr. M. (actually Breuer), created to represent multiple people, serves as an example of this phenomenon (Freud 1900). Freud notes that he associated this figure’s name and behavior with a doctor he knew, its physical characteristics and illness with his brother, and its pale appearance with both individuals.

On the other hand, Freud notes that the process of condensation in dreams occurs most prominently through words and names. According to him, words in dreams often function like objects, and the thoughts associated with these words can be combined, like the words themselves, to form new structures of meaning. Freud illustrates the process of condensation in dreams through numerous examples based on words he encountered in his own dreams (e.g., propyl, botanik, autodidasker, erzefilisch, etc.), explaining how the desires sought to be gratified in these dreams are concealed (Freud 1900).

Freud emphasizes that, in addition to the mechanism of condensation, the mechanism of “displacement” also plays an important role in the distortion of the meaning of latent dream content. In Freud’s dream theory, the displacement mechanism involves shifting dream elements or emotions onto other objects, persons, or events in order to conceal the latent content of the dream—which may be difficult to express for various reasons—and make the dream more acceptable (Freud 1900). Freud provides several examples of this mechanism in operation, noting that the word “botanik” in his “Botanical Monograph” dream actually represented conflicts and problems he experienced with colleagues; in another dream in which he saw his uncle’s yellow beard, the beard symbolized his uncle’s ambitious desires.

Freud explains the absence of emotions accompanying the manifest content of dreams, or their presence in inappropriate forms (for example, not feeling sadness/disgust in response to a frightening/disgusting situation in a dream, or experiencing an incongruous fear in response to a harmless situation), through the work of dream formation, which distorts the latent content of dreams (Freud 1900).

## Emotions in Dreams

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According to Freud, if an emotion is present in a dream, it will also be present in the latent dream thoughts; however, the reverse is not true—that is, the absence of an emotion in a dream does not imply the absence of emotion in the latent content (Freud 1900). As an example of the manifestation of emotions in dreams, Freud cites the case of his patient who, in a dream, saw her younger brother lying in a coffin but did not feel any pain or sadness. In this dream, which Freud interpreted as concealing the patient’s desire to see her lover once more, the emotions are consistent with that desire; therefore, according to Freud, it is normal that the patient does not feel any sadness in her dream (Freud 1900). According to Freud, in this dream, dream censorship operated over the content of the dream, while no censorship was applied to the emotion expected upon the fulfillment of the desire.

On the other hand, Freud provides another group of dreams in which dream censorship is applied not to the content of the dream but to emotions: dreams of the death of loved ones (Freud 1900). Freud argues that the meaning of these dreams, in which feelings of sadness and pain accompany the death of loved ones, lies in a past wish regarding the death of the person in question (Freud 1900). According to him, in such dreams, the dream-work produces distortion not through the manifest content of the dream but through the emotions in the dream. Because the person whose death is desired is also loved, the conflict experienced, and consequently the repressed wish for the loved one’s death, is censored in the dream through feelings such as sadness and pain accompanying the death of the loved one, thus achieving gratification (Freud 1900). In this way, the dreamer cannot realize that the feelings of pain and sadness, which are thought to be normal reactions to the death of a loved one, actually function as a censorship mechanism allowing the unacceptable wish for that person’s death to be gratified in the dream without conscious awareness. In addition to dreams of the death of loved ones, Freud classifies dreams of nudity, flying dreams, and examination dreams within the group of typical dreams (Freud 1900).

## Post-Freudian Theories of Dreams

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Although Freud laid the foundations of dream theory, other theorists have proposed different interpretations regarding the meaning and function of dreams. In the early period of his acquaintance with Freud, Jung agreed with him on the protective function of sleep and the role of dreams in wish fulfillment. However, over time, he criticized Freud’s interpretation as reductionist and developed his own independent views through concepts such as symbolism, the duality of the mind, individuation, direct

image relationships, and the appearance of archetypal elements in dreams (Zhu 2013). Jung emphasized that various archetypes emerging in dreams—such as the “Anima/Animus,” the “Hero,” the “Shadow,” and the “Great Mother”—should be recognized and interpreted through specific symbols or recurring themes (Jung 1964, 1968). Jung attributed a balancing and healing wisdom to the unconscious, arguing that the primary function of most dreams is to scan psychic and physical states and generate complementary or alerting content (Jung 1964). Regarding such alerting dreams, Jung recounts that he advised a colleague, who had narrated a mountain dream to him, to take extra precautions in future climbs or to avoid mountaineering altogether; nevertheless, approximately three months later, that colleague lost his life in a mountain accident (Jung 1964).

In some of his writings, Jung argued that dreams are already sufficiently complex and, emphasizing the expression from the Talmud that “dreams are their own interpretation,” he maintained that certain dreams should be accepted as they are, without seeking hidden meanings or alterations behind their manifest content (Jung 1968). In the post-Freudian period, ego psychologists, object relations theorists, and self-psychology scholars described dream activity in terms of synthetic functions such as active thinking, problem solving, and planning (Kohut 1977, Segal 1977, Ornstein 1987). Similarly to Jung, they emphasized that there is no theoretical necessity for dreams to always have latent content underlying their manifest content (Lansky 1992).

Kohut describes the effort of dreams to correct problematic internal psychological states through what he terms “self-state dreams” (Kohut 1977). He emphasizes that the concept of self-state dreams adds a new dimension to Freud’s theory and is applicable to a specific group of patients, developed not to alter Freud’s theories but to complement them. Like Freud, Kohut notes that some dreams express latent content that can be verbally articulated—such as instinctual wishes, conflicts, and attempts to resolve conflicts—and should be approached in therapy using traditional free association. On the other hand, in some dreams, emotions that cannot be verbally expressed, such as the fear of self-dissolution, manifest themselves in the form of explicit dream images (Kohut 1977). Kohut asserts that the function of these dreams is to cope with these frightening, unnamed processes by covering them with visual imagery, thereby facilitating the restoration of an integrated self-structure.

## **Freud’s Method of Dream Interpretation**

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In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud discusses two types of dream interpretation commonly used by people who are not experts in dreams: (1) symbolic dream interpretation and (2) the cipher method (Freud 1900).

The first method, symbolic dream interpretation, considers the dream as a whole and substitutes another comprehensible content that resembles the dream in certain respects. The first of these methods, symbolic dream interpretation, considers the dream as a whole and substitutes another comprehensible content that resembles the dream in certain respects. An example of this type of interpretation is Joseph’s explanation of Pharaoh’s dream, in which seven fat cows are followed by seven thin cows, and the thin cows eat the fat ones. Joseph interprets this as “seven years of abundance in Egypt followed by seven years of famine.” Freud emphasizes that, in some dreams, the relationship between the symbol and what it represents is obvious, whereas in others the selection of symbols in the dream is surprising. He highlights that symbolic dream interpretation is limited and cannot be applied in general terms. According to Freud, Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream reflects the commonly held belief in the prophetic nature of dreams, which would fail when applied to more complex dreams (Freud 1900). “famine, during which the abundance of the years of plenty will be consumed” (Freud 1900).

Freud refers to another type of dream interpretation, in which dreams are viewed as a kind of ciphered writing where the meaning of each symbol is determined by a fixed code key, as the “cipher method.” He notes that what motivates the search for this type of dream interpretation (the cipher method) is the existence of meaningless and complex dreams (Freud 1900). In this type of interpretation, which can be found in any dream interpretation book, a “Letter” seen in a dream might be translated as “boredom,” while a “funeral” could be interpreted as “engagement.” According to Freud, this method has no scientific value

because it requires the code key—or the dream interpretation book—to be reliable, yet no one can guarantee this, and it cannot provide a meaningful context for how the relevant symbols relate to a person's life (Freud 1900).

Freud notes that his patients, to whom he applied the free association method—asking them to say whatever came to mind on a particular topic—also recounted their dreams to him. In this way, he discovered that, by tracing back from a pathological thought, memories that should be followed could also be intertwined with dreams. Following this, Freud began to treat the dream itself as a symptom and applied the interpretive methods used for other symptoms to dreams as well (Freud 1900).

Freud notes that when he asked patients who dreamed what they thought about their dreams, most of the time nothing came to mind that provided a meaningful whole, nor could it. He emphasizes that in dream analysis, the elements of the dream should be examined in fragments through the dreamer's associations. Freud states that his own method of dream interpretation is, in this context, similar to the "cipher-solving" method; however, he stresses that the content of a dream can carry different meanings for different individuals and in different contexts, and for this reason, his method differs from the cipher method, which translates dream content using a fixed key (Freud 1900).

This theoretical framework regarding Freud's method of dream interpretation also provides the basis for the analysis of a historical dream to be examined in this study. In this context, the dream narrated by Atatürk to his aide-de-camp Salih Bozok in September 1938 is analyzed in the light of Freud's theory of dreams.

The dream was selected because its historical context is known and the narrator is clearly identified. The text of the dream was evaluated based on the account in Salih Bozok's memoir, *Yaveri Atatürk'ü Anlatıyor*. The dream, experienced during the final stage of Atatürk's illness and shortly after he dictated his will, was considered a meaningful example for psychoanalytic analysis both in terms of the images it contained and the conditions under which it was recounted. In the analysis, the images in the dream text were interpreted within the context of condensation and displacement mechanisms, according to Freud's dream theory. In the analysis of the dream, since it was not possible to obtain the dreamer's direct associations, certain details in the dream narrative were correlated with biographical information about Atatürk's final days in order to align historical reality with the psychoanalytic interpretation.

## **Atatürk's Final Days and the Dream He Recounted to His Aide**

The illness that ultimately caused Atatürk's death first manifested at the end of 1937, and in January 1938, Dr. Nihad Belger diagnosed him with a liver disease (Aydın 2016). From March of the same year onward, foreign doctors brought from abroad were also consulted during his treatment. However, the illness began to take a serious course from June 1938, and due to his severely limited mobility caused by the disease, Atatürk was transferred to Dolmabahçe Palace on the night of July 24–25, 1938 (Aydın 2016).

Due to the progression of his illness, Atatürk required the removal of fluid from his abdomen (paracentesis) and, fearing that his intestines might be perforated during the procedure, felt the need to have his will prepared. The testament was officially initiated when it was secretly delivered on September 6, 1938, to Istanbul's 6th Notary, İsmail Kunter (Soyak 2004, Aydın 2016). Atatürk underwent the paracentesis for the first time on September 7, and the procedure was repeated on September 22, 1938 (Öke 1943). A few days after this procedure, Atatürk had a dream, which he recounted to his aide Salih Bozok (Bozok 2001).

According to Salih Bozok, in Atatürk's dream, he and Bozok were sitting together in the lounge of a hotel. In one corner of the lounge was a billiard table, and behind it stood a man whose back was turned to Atatürk, and whose face he could not see. At that moment, a large crowd, described by Atatürk as "about thirty burly men," entered the room. One of them grabbed the cue from the billiard table and began striking the man with his back turned on the shoulder. Bozok wanted to intervene, but Atatürk gestured for him to remain calm. The assailant then turned toward Atatürk and Bozok, approached them, and, in a threatening manner, aimed his pistol at them. He fired at both of them, with one bullet hitting Atatürk and the other hitting

Bozok. Immediately afterward, as if nothing had happened, he said to them, "Get up, let's dance." Atatürk and Bozok then began dancing in front of the assailant in response to this command (Bozok 2001).

## **Analysis of Atatürk's Dream**

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It is known that Atatürk learned to play billiards when he came to Istanbul in 1899 to attend the military academy, that he once had a billiards instructor named Niko Cankopulos, and that he had previously played billiards at places such as Çankaya Mansion, Saray Cinema, and Dolmabahçe Palace, where he spent the last days of his life (Uysal 1949, Özalp and Özalp 1992). The fact that a sudden attack occurs in the dream within a setting like a billiard room—an environment that could be considered safe and familiar in Atatürk's life—may represent a disturbance in his sense of security and an unconscious awareness of the approaching threat of death.

At the beginning of the dream, it is noteworthy that the person described as having their back turned at the billiard table and struck on the shoulder with the cue was not identifiable by Atatürk. Freud illustrates a similar phenomenon in his own dream, where the face of a person he saw resembled both his uncle and a friend. He explains this as an example of the mechanism of condensation in dreams, in which common elements are combined—similar to Galton's method of photographing three sisters separately on the same sensitive plate and then merging them into a single portrait (Freud 1900, Draaisma 2015).

At the beginning of the dream, if the person sitting with their back turned by the table and then standing up were representing an important figure from Atatürk's life—or, through the process of condensation, multiple people simultaneously—one would expect that Atatürk would have identified the person's face, and that certain features such as their voice, posture, or facial characteristics would also have been conveyed associatively by Atatürk.

On the other hand, Atatürk's inability to see or identify the face of the person in his dream—when considered alongside the fact that this person is struck with a cue later in the dream—can be interpreted not so much as a result of condensation but as serving an object function that explains the intentions and actions of the people entering the room. In other words, rather than representing a specific identity, this figure may have been concretized as a "target" toward which the aggressors' anger and threat were directed. A more daring interpretation is that this faceless figure could represent Atatürk himself; however, the dream-work—that is, the unconscious censorship mechanisms active in the dream-production process—may have rendered the face unidentifiable, preventing this from being consciously recognized and preserving the continuity of the dream narrative.

Freud states that objects seen in dreams such as sticks, tree branches, umbrellas (due to their erection-like rigidity), knives, spears, canes, and ties symbolize the male sexual organ, whereas objects like boxes, parcels, chests, cupboards, stoves, caves, and ships represent the female sexual organ (Freud 1900). Freud also interprets ascending or descending stairs and ladders in dreams as symbolic of sexual intercourse (Freud 1900).

Speculatively, the game of billiards—played with balls that, due to their round shape, could symbolize the female sexual organ, and cues that, because of their long and pointed form, could be associated with the male sexual organ—might be interpreted as representing sexual intercourse. However, Freud emphasizes that while some dream symbols almost always signify the same thing, it is also possible for any given symbol to represent itself rather than something hidden in the latent dream content. He adds: "I would like to stress that the significance and meaning of symbols for dream interpretation should not be exaggerated, that dream translation should not be limited to the translation of symbols, and that the dreamer's associations should not be neglected. Essentially, these two methods of dream interpretation should complement each other, yet in both theory and practice the interpretation of the dream itself always takes precedence; when interpreting a dream, the expressions of the dreamer are decisive, and the translation of symbols carried out by us can only play a supplementary role" (Freud 1900). At this point, it should be reiterated that the meanings Freud attributed to symbols are not absolute, and that each dream must be evaluated within its own context. In this framework, considering the fact that the man at the

billiard table in the dream is struck with a cue, it can be argued that the cues acquire significance not as potential sexual symbols but rather as instruments of attack or threat.

In the dream, the burly man striking the unidentifiable person on the shoulder with a cue, then approaching Atatürk and his aide in a threatening manner, combined with the aide's desire to intervene and Atatürk's silent gesture for him to stay calm, and ultimately both being shot, can be interpreted—considering that Atatürk's illness was advancing and he had already prepared his will at the time the dream occurred—as reflecting Atatürk's psychological state in the face of his impending death. In this context, it can be suggested that Atatürk, by emotionally or mentally withdrawing from the scenes in which the reality of death is symbolized as a threat—choosing to remain silent rather than intervene—was attempting to establish an unconscious distance between himself and death. Moreover, the fact that his aide also remains powerless in the face of this threat and is shot in the dream may symbolically express Atatürk's belief that no external assistance—not even that of his aide—could save him from death.

In the dream, the fact that it does not end after Atatürk and his aide are shot, their dancing in front of the assailant following his command to “get up, let's dance,” and the number of people entering the lounge at the beginning of the dream being identified by Atatürk as thirty may indicate the point of wish fulfillment that the dream primarily serves.

Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, mentions numerous dreams involving numbers and states that he demonstrates in a very clear and illuminating way how numbers and calculations were used in the material of dream-work to express the latent content of dreams (Freud 1900). In a case recounted by Freud, a woman nearing the end of her treatment dreamed that her daughter took 3 florins and 65 kreuzers from her purse to make a payment. The woman objected, saying, “What are you doing? The price is only 21 kreuzers.” While interpreting this dream, Freud notes that the woman had sent her daughter to a school in Vienna, and that her daughter's school term would end in three weeks—meaning the woman's treatment was also limited to the duration of her daughter's schooling. Furthermore, according to Freud, the day before the dream, the school principal had asked the woman whether her child could remain at the school for an additional year. Freud interprets this dream as representing temporal processes through numerical values of currency: “3 florins 65 kreuzers” → 365 days (1 year), “21 kreuzers” → 21 days. In this dream, the wish fulfillment was realized by shortening the duration of therapy and thus reducing its “cost”; with time represented in terms of money, the phrase “time is money” is almost concretized (Freud 1900).

Freud emphasizes that in the world we live in, nothing can be completely arbitrary. According to him, when we bring a number to mind seemingly at random, even if it does not appear personally significant or meaningful at that moment, it is actually determined by our current thoughts and mental state (Freud 1900).

In Atatürk's dream, the burly men are numerically described as “thirty.” There is no indication in the account that they explicitly say, “We are thirty,” or carry a symbol denoting this, nor that Atatürk counted them one by one. This suggests that, as Freud also noted, the number may have held a special place and significance in Atatürk's psychic life at the time he experienced the dream.

Since calendars and time planning are pervasive in our lives and play an important role, the use of the number 30 in this context is quite common. Most months have at least 30 days, making it one of the fundamental organizing elements of daily life. It is a well-known fact that in the final stages of his illness, Atatürk repeatedly expressed his desire to attend the 15th anniversary celebrations of Republic Day on October 29, 1938, in Ankara (Bozok 2001). The number “thirty” used by Atatürk when recounting this dream in September may, therefore, reflect a condensation mechanism linking both the upcoming month of October and the date of October 29, connecting symbolically to Republic Day (29 October 1938) and the corresponding month.

The “dancing” scene at the end of the dream, although at first glance appearing as a strange or incongruous transitional element—indeed, many dreams contain similar transitions due to censorship—can be interpreted as the displacement of the idea and desire for celebration onto the act of “dancing.” When considered alongside the previously discussed interpretation of the number “thirty,” this suggests that



Atatürk, aware of his approaching death, may have sought to fulfill his desire to participate in the Republic Day celebrations during the final period of his life through this dream.

**Wish:** Participating in the Republic Day celebrations

**Condensation:** Metaphorical reference to the month following September through the number "thirty" + proximity to the number 29 corresponding to October 29

**Displacement:** Expression of the idea of celebration metonymically through the act/idea of dancing

## Conclusion

This study aimed to provide an attempt to apply dream interpretation—a fundamental component of psychoanalytic theory—not only through clinical examples based on individual associations but also via a historical figure's documented dream. For the first time in the literature, one of Atatürk's dreams has been analyzed in the light of Freud's key concepts in dream theory and the censorship mechanism. In this regard, the study seeks both to offer an alternative perspective on Atatürk's inner world during the period preceding his death and to contribute theoretically to the applicability of psychoanalytic dream interpretation in historical and cultural contexts.

The symbols present in the analyzed dream—the unidentifiable person, the attack with the cue, the "dancing" command, and the number "thirty"—were examined within the framework of condensation and displacement mechanisms as defined by Freud.

Considering historical records regarding Atatürk's desire to attend the Republic Day celebrations, it is suggested that the images and associations appearing in different parts of the dream, such as the "dancing" command/action and the number "thirty," reflect an attempt to satisfy a repressed wish related to the upcoming celebrations through the dream.

On the other hand, this study has notable limitations. First, the analyzed dream was not recorded directly by Atatürk but is based solely on the written account of his aide, Salih Bozok. Bozok's narration may differ from or omit details of how the dream was originally conveyed; therefore, interpretations should be considered in light of the limitations and subjectivity of this transmission. Freud states that the elements contained in a dream are connected in some way to the events of the previous day, which he also called "day residues" (Freud 1900). A limitation in this study is that it is not known whether Atatürk engaged in any activities, conversations, or intellectual pursuits related to billiards at Dolmabahçe Palace prior to having the dream. Freud emphasizes that each individual has the freedom to endow their dream world with unique characteristics, making it largely unintelligible to others, and that it is not fully possible to interpret a dream without accessing the unconscious processes behind its content through the dreamer's associations. In this context, although the dream account includes descriptions such as "burly," "thirty," and "unidentifiable," without direct access to Atatürk's personal associations, it is not possible to adequately interpret the unconscious content of the dream; this constitutes a significant limitation. Furthermore, the absence of any record of Atatürk's emotions during and after the dream makes it difficult to draw conclusions about its emotional dimension, thereby limiting the depth of interpretation.

Psychoanalytic analysis of historical figures carries methodological limitations due to the lack of direct clinical interviews and free-association data. Therefore, the findings presented in this study should be considered not as claims of scientific accuracy but as a theoretical example of interpretation.

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